

Put the pope in the dock

"immunity cannot hold. The Vatican should feel the full weight of international law"

Geoffrey Robertson

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Well may the pope defy "the petty gossip of dominant opinion". But the Holy See can no longer ignore international law, which now counts the widespread or systematic sexual abuse of children as a crime against humanity. The anomalous claim of the Vatican to be a state – and of the pope to be a head of state and hence immune from legal action – cannot stand up to scrutiny.